

City of Scottsdale's Comprehensive Financial Policies

The following City financial policies adopted by the City Council establish the framework for Scottsdale's overall fiscal planning and management. They set forth guidelines against which current budgetary performance can be measured and proposals for future programs can be evaluated. Scottsdale's publicly adopted financial policies show the credit rating industry and prospective investors (bond buyers) the City's commitment to sound financial management and fiscal integrity. The financial policies also improve the City's fiscal stability by helping City officials plan fiscal strategy with a consistent approach. Adherence to adopted financial policies promotes sound financial management, which can lead to improvement in City bond ratings and lower cost of capital. The City is in compliance with the comprehensive financial policies adopted with this budget.

Operating Management Policies

1. All departments will participate in the responsibility of meeting policy goals and ensuring long-term financial health. Future service plans and program initiatives will be developed to reflect current policy directives, projected resources and future service requirements. In order to ensure compliance with policy, sunset provisions will be required on all grant program initiatives and incorporated into other service plans, as appropriate.
2. The budget process is intended to weigh all competing requests for City resources, within expected fiscal constraints. Requests for new, ongoing programs made outside the budget process will be discouraged.
3. Budget development will use strategic multi-year fiscal planning, conservative revenue forecasts, and modified zero-base expenditure analysis that requires every program to be justified annually in terms of meeting intended objectives ("effectiveness criteria") and in terms of value received for dollars allocated ("efficiency criteria"). The process will include a diligent review of programs by staff, management, citizens and City Council.
4. A City Council Budget Sub-Committee will solicit citizen input and serve in an advisory capacity in reviewing operating and capital budget recommendations from a departmental, program, and goals perspective.
5. Revenues will not be dedicated for specific purposes, unless required by law or generally accepted accounting practices (GAAP). All non-restricted revenues will be deposited in the General Fund and appropriated by the budget process.
6. Current revenues will fund current expenditures and a diversified and stable revenue system will be developed to protect programs from short-term fluctuations in any single revenue source. To ensure that Scottsdale does not become overly reliant on 'growth' revenues for operating needs, a minimum of 25% construction privilege tax revenues will be transferred annually to the Capital Improvement Program for one-time capital project use.
7. Addition of personnel will only be requested to meet program initiatives and policy directives, after service needs have been thoroughly examined and it is substantiated that additional staffing will result in increased revenue or enhanced operating efficiencies. To the extent feasible, personnel cost reductions will be achieved through attrition.
8. Enterprise (Water, Sewer, Solid Waste Management, and Airport) user fees and charges will be examined annually to ensure that they recover all direct and indirect costs of service and be approved by the City Council. Any unfavorable balances in cost recovery will be highlighted in budget documents. Rate adjustments for enterprise operations will be based on five-year financial plans.
9. All non-enterprise user fees and charges will be examined annually to determine the direct and indirect cost of service recovery rate. The acceptable recovery rate and any associated changes to user fees and charges will be approved by the City Council.
10. Development impact fees, as permitted by state law, for capital expenses attributable to new development will be reviewed annually to ensure that fees recover all direct and indirect development-related expenses and be approved by City Council. Any unfavorable balances in cost recovery will be highlighted in budget documents.

11. Capital equipment replacement will be accomplished through the use of a "rental" rate structure. The rates will be revised annually to ensure that charges to operating departments are sufficient for operation and replacement of vehicles and other capital equipment (fleet, computers, phones and copier systems). Replacement costs will be based upon equipment lifecycle financial analysis.
12. Grant funding will be considered to leverage City funds. Inconsistent and/or fluctuating grants should not be used to fund ongoing programs. Programs financed with grant monies will be budgeted in separate cost centers, and the service program will be adjusted to reflect the level of available funding. In the event of reduced grant funding, City resources will be substituted only after all program priorities and alternatives are considered during the budget process.
13. Balanced revenue and expenditure forecasts will be prepared to examine the City's ability to absorb operating costs due to changes in the economy, service demands, and capital improvements. The forecast will be updated annually, focus on a three-year horizon, but include a five-year outlook.
14. Alternative means of service delivery will be evaluated to ensure that quality services are provided to our citizens at the most competitive and economical cost. Departments, in cooperation with the City Manager, will identify all activities that could be provided by another source and review options/alternatives to current service delivery. The review of service delivery alternatives and the need for the service will be performed annually or on an "opportunity" basis.
15. Cash and Investment programs will be maintained in accordance with the City Charter and the adopted investment policy and will ensure that proper controls and safeguards are maintained. City funds will be managed in a prudent and diligent manner with an emphasis on safety of principal, liquidity, and financial return on principal, in that order.
16. The City will follow an aggressive, consistent, but sensitive to the circumstances policy of collecting revenues to the limit of our ability. Collection policy goal will be for all adjusted uncollectible accounts to be no more than .5 of 1% of the total City revenue being adjusted for bad debts annually.

Capital Management Policies

17. A five-year Capital Improvement Plan will be developed and updated annually, including anticipated funding sources. Capital improvement projects are defined as infrastructure or equipment purchases or construction which results in a capitalized asset costing more than \$25,000 and having a useful (depreciable life) of two years or more.
18. The capital improvement plan will include, in addition to current operating maintenance expenditures, adequate funding to support repair and replacement of deteriorating infrastructure and avoidance of a significant unfunded liability.
19. Proposed capital projects will be reviewed and prioritized by a cross-departmental team regarding accurate costing (design, capital, and operating) and overall consistency with the City's goals and objectives. Financing sources will then be identified for the highest ranking projects.
20. Capital improvement lifecycle costs will be coordinated with the development of the Operating Budget. Future operating, maintenance and replacement costs associated with new capital improvements will be forecast, matched to available revenue sources and included in the Operating Budget. Capital project contract awards will include a fiscal impact statement disclosing the expected operating impact of the project and when such cost is expected to occur.
21. Dedicated two tenths of percent (.2%) privilege tax revenue for transportation improvements will be restricted to funding the planning, design, construction and acquisition costs associated with building, renovating, or enhancing capital projects for streets, highways, traffic control, transit and aviation and transportation improvement operating costs.
22. Pay-as-you-go Capital Improvement Plan financing should account for a minimum of 25 percent of all capital improvement projects for each five-year planning period. Pay-as-you-go financing is defined as all sources of revenue other than City debt issuance, i.e., fund balance contributions, developer contributions, grants, endowments, etc.

23. Pay-as-you-go contributions up to 10% or \$500,000, whichever is less, may be authorized by City Council towards any single utility undergrounding improvement district. Any unused annual budget authorization may carryforward towards a maximum \$2 million appropriation for utility undergrounding capital projects that benefit the community as a whole.

Debt Management Policies

24. The City will seek to maintain and, if possible, improve our current bond rating in order to minimize borrowing costs and preserve access to credit.
25. An analysis showing how the new issue combined with current debt impacts the City's debt capacity and conformance with City debt policies will accompany every future bond issue proposal.
26. The City will communicate, and, where appropriate, coordinate with all jurisdictions with which we share a common tax base concerning our collective plans for future debt issues.
27. City Debt Service costs (GO, MPC, HURF, Revenue Bond, McDowell Sonoran Preservation and Contractual Debt) should not exceed 25% of the City's operating revenue in order to control fixed costs and ensure expenditure flexibility. Improvement District (ID) and Community Facility District (CFD) debt service is not included in this calculation because it is paid by district property owners and is not an obligation of the general citizenry. Separate criteria have been established regarding ID and CFD debt policies.
28. General Obligation debt, which is supported by property tax revenues and grows in proportion to the City's assessed valuation and/or property tax rate increases, will be utilized as authorized by voters. Other types of voter-approved debt (e.g., water, sewer, and HURF) may also be utilized when they are supported by dedicated revenue sources (e.g., fees and user charges).
29. General Obligation debt issuances will be managed on an annual basis to match funds to Capital Improvement Plan cashflow requirements while being sensitive to the property tax burden on citizens. Careful management of bond issuances will allow the City to not exceed \$1.50 property tax per \$100 assessed value.
30. Municipal Property Corporation and contractual debt, which is non-voter approved, will be utilized only when a dedicated revenue source (e.g., golf course revenue, privilege tax, bed tax) can be identified to pay debt service expenses. The following considerations will be made to the question of pledging of project (facility) revenues towards debt service requirements:
 - a. The project requires monies not available from other sources.
 - b. Matching fund monies are available which may be lost if not applied for in a timely manner.
 - c. Catastrophic conditions.
 - d. The project to be financed will generate net positive revenues (i.e., the additional tax revenues generated by the project will be greater than the debt service requirements). The net revenues should not simply be positive over the life of the bonds, but must be positive each year within a reasonably short period (e.g., by the third year of debt service payments).
31. McDowell Sonoran Preservation debt service will be funded by the dedicated .2% privilege tax. The City's privilege tax to revenue bond debt service goal will be at least 1.5:1 for senior lien debt to ensure the City's ability to pay for preserve debt from this elastic revenue source.
32. Improvement District (ID) and Community Facility District *(CFD) Bonds shall be permitted only when there is a general City benefit. ID and CFD bonds will be utilized only when it is expected that they will be issued for their full term. It is intended that ID and CFD bonds will be primarily issued for existing neighborhoods desiring improvements to their property such as roads, water lines, sewer lines, streetlights, and drainage.
 - a. Improvement District debt will be permitted only when the full cash value of the property, as reported by the Assessor's Office, to debt ratio (prior to improvements being installed) is a minimum of 3/1 prior to issuance of debt and 5/1 or higher after construction of improvements. Should the full cash value to debt ratio not meet the minimum requirements, property value may be determined by an appraisal paid for by the applicant and administered by the City. In addition, the City's cumulative improvement district debt will not exceed 5

percent of the City's secondary assessed valuation. Bonds issued to finance improvement district projects will not have maturities longer than ten years.

- b. Community Facility District debt will be permitted only when the full cash value of the property, as reported by the Assessor's Office, to debt ratio (prior to improvements being installed) is a minimum of 3/1 prior to issuance of debt and 5/1 or higher after construction of improvements. In addition, the City's cumulative facility district debt will not exceed 5 percent of the City's secondary assessed valuation. The landowner/developer shall also contribute \$.25 in public infrastructure improvement costs of each dollar of public infrastructure improvement debt to be financed by the district.
 33. Debt financing should not exceed the useful life of the infrastructure improvement with the average (weighted) bond maturities at or below ten years.
 34. A ratio of current assets to current liabilities of at least 2/1 will be maintained to ensure the City's ability to pay short-term obligations.
 35. Bond interest earnings will be limited to funding changes to the bond financed Capital Improvement Plan, as approved by City Council, or be applied to debt service payment on the bonds issued for construction of this plan.
 36. Utility rates will be set, as a minimum, to ensure the ratio of revenue to debt service meets our bond indenture requirement of 1.2/1. The City goal will be to maintain a minimum ratio of utility revenue to debt service of 1.6/1 or greater, to ensure debt coverage in times of revenue fluctuations attributable to weather or other causes, and to ensure a balanced pay-as-you-go Capital Improvement Plan.
- ### Reserve Policies
37. All fund designations and reserves will be evaluated annually for long-term adequacy and use requirements in conjunction with development of the City's balanced five year financial plan.
 38. General Fund Stabilization Reserve of 10 percent of annual general governmental (General/HURF funds) operating expenditures will be maintained for unforeseen emergencies or catastrophic impacts to the City. Funds in excess of 10 percent, but not to exceed \$5 million, may be used for economic investment in the community when justified by the financial return to the City.
 39. Debt Service Reserve will be funded with secondary property taxes, levied by City Council, sufficient to pay the bonded indebtedness for General Obligation bond principal and interest. A debt service sinking fund will be maintained to account for these restricted revenues and debt payments, as well as any additional debt amounts deemed to be advisable and necessary for any public or municipal purposes.
 40. Water and Sewer Fund Reserves will be maintained to meet three objectives: 1) ensure adequate funding for operations; 2) to ensure infrastructure repair and replacement; and, 3) to provide working capital to provide level rate change for customers.
 - a. An Operating Reserve will be funded not to exceed 90 days of budgeted system operating expenditures to provide sufficient expenditure flexibility during times of unusual weather resulting in variations in average consumption and associated operating expenses.
 - b. A Replacement and Extension Reserve will be maintained, per bond indenture requirements, to meet the minimum requirement of 2% of all tangible assets of the system to ensure replacement of water and sewer infrastructure.
 - c. In addition, Working Capital will be funded based upon a multi-year financial plan to provide adequate cash for water and sewer capital improvements and to level the impact of rate increases upon our customers.

41. Solid Waste Management Fund Reserve will be funded not to exceed 90 days of budgeted system operating expenditures to provide contingency funding for costs associated with solid waste disposal. Costs may include site purchase, technology applications, or inter-governmental investment to maximize the value of waste disposal activities.
42. Aviation Fund Reserve will be funded not to exceed 90 days of budgeted system operating expenditures to provide contingency funding for costs associated with airport operations. Costs may include site purchase, technology applications, or inter-governmental investment to maximize the value of airport activities.
43. Self-Insurance Reserves will be maintained at a level, which, together with purchased insurance policies, will adequately indemnify the City's property, liability, and health benefit risk. A qualified actuarial firm shall be retained on an annual basis in order to recommend appropriate funding levels, which will be approved by Council.
44. Fleet Management Reserve will be maintained based upon lifecycle replacement plans to ensure adequate fund balance required for systematic replacement of fleet vehicles and operational contingencies. Operating departments will be charged for fleet operating costs per vehicle class and replacement costs spread over the useful life of the vehicles.
45. Contingency Reserves to be determined annually will be maintained to offset unanticipated revenue shortfalls and/or unexpected expenditure increases. Contingency reserves may also be used for unanticipated and/or inadequately budgeted events threatening the public health or safety. Use of contingency funds should be utilized only after all budget sources have been examined for available funds, and subject to City Council approval.

Financial Reporting Policies

46. The City's accounting and financial reporting systems will be maintained in conformance with all state and federal laws, generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) and standards of the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) and the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA).
47. An annual audit will be performed by an independent public accounting firm, with an audit opinion to be included with the City's published Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR).
48. The City's CAFR will be submitted to the GFOA Certification of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting Program. The financial report should be in conformity with GAAP, demonstrate compliance with finance related legal and contractual provisions, disclose thoroughness and detail sufficiency, and minimize ambiguities and potentials for misleading inference.
49. The City's CAFR will also be submitted to the National Federation of Municipal Analysts (NFMA) Awards Program and to national repositories identified by the NFMA as a continuing commitment to disclose thoroughness to enable investors to make informed decisions.
50. The City's Budget will be submitted to the GFOA Distinguished Budget Presentation Program. The budget should satisfy criteria as a financial and programmatic policy document, as a comprehensive financial plan, as an operations guide for all organizational units and as a communications device for all significant budgetary issues, trends and resource choices.
51. Financial systems will maintain internal controls to monitor revenues, expenditures, and program performance on an ongoing basis.